

Message Text

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ACTION PM-04

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9861

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 8550

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, VE, US

SUBJECT: REPLACEMENT OF US MILGRP COMMANDER

REF: STATE 192749

1. THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE, GENERAL LEAL TORRES, HAS EXPRESSED TO ME ON TWO OCCASIONS HIS FIRM PREFERENCE FOR AN ARMY COLONEL AS THE SUCCESSOR TO COLONEL BUSH IN THE MILGRP COMMANDER'S POST. OTHER RANKING OFFICERS OF VENEZUELA'S MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT, INCLUDING AIR FORCE CHIEF GENERAL FERNANDO JOSE PAREDES BELLO, HAVE MADE KNOW TO US A SIMILAR PREFERENCE.

2. THE COLLAPSE OF THE FY '75 FMS CREDIT HAS LEFT OUR RELATIONS WITH THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY IN SOMEHWAT LESS THAN OPTIMUM CONDITION. PERISITING IN THE ATTEMPT TO FILL THIS POSITION WITH AN AIR FORCE OFFICER WOULD SIMPLY ADD A FURTHER AGGRAVATION.

3. THE DATT AT THIS POST IS AN AIR FORCE OFFICER. IT MAKES NO SENSE TO ME TO HAVE BOTH ELEMENTS OF OUR MILITARY HERE LED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THAT BRANCH WHEN THE PREEMINENT SERVICE IN VENEZUELA IS THE ARMY.

4. I AM UNABLE TO IDENTIFY ANY USG NATIONAL INTEREST TO BE SERVED BY NOMINATING AN AIR FORCE OFFICER AGAINST THE EXPRESS DESIRE OF THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND HIS SENIOR COLLEAGUES. SURELY THE PRIMARY CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE THE FUTURE OF OUR RELATIONS WITH THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY. WITH THAT CONSIDERATION IN MIND, I FIND THE PROPOSED NOMINATION UNACCEPTABLE.

SHLAUDEMAN

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